

Message Text

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61

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 CU-04 AID-20 PC-10 HEW-08 DRC-01 /140 W

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R 031640Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5387

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS TS

SUBJECT: STUDENT STRIKE CONTINUES UNABATED DESPITE
PARTY AND FACULTY PLEAS TO RETURN TO CLASSES

REF: TUNIS 2433

1. SUMMARY: STUDENT STRIKE CONTINUES IN MAIN FACULTIES
OF LAW, SCIENCE, LETTER AND MEDICINE BUT SITUATION IS
CALM. NO END OF STRIKE IN SIGHT DESPITE RECENT CALLS
FOR RETURN TO CLASSES. IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED EXAMS

WILL BE HELD AS SCHEDULED. SOME STUDENTS MAY RETURN TO
CLASSES AS EXAMS DRAW NEARER. UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF
STUDENTS STILL BEING HELD BY POLICE REPORTEDLY IN
CONNECTION THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH MARXIST-LENINIST
GROUPS. TRIAL OF STUDENTS REPORTED REFTEL IS UNDER
APPEAL. END SUMMARY.

2. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS REMAIN ON STRIKE FOR SECOND
CONSECUTIVE WEEK WITH NO SIGN THAT END OF STRIKE IS
NEAR. SITUATION IS CALM BUT SECURITY FORCES (BOP)
STILL EVIDENT AT KEY POINTS OF UNIVERSITY CAMPUS.

3. COUNCILS OF FACULTY OF SCIENCES AND FACULTY OF
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LETTERS ISSUED APPEALS MAY 1 AND 2 FOR STUDENTS TO RETURN

TO CLASSES. SO FAR THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THESE HAVE HAD POSITIVE EFFECT. STUDENTS AT SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING (ENIT) WHO USUALLY IGNORE STUDENT STRIKES WERE ON STRIKE DURING EARLY PART OF WEEK BUT REPORTEDLY MOST HAVE NOW RETURNED TO CLASSES. BOP UNITS STATIONED NEAR ENIT MAY 3 APPEAR TO BE ENSURING NO ATTEMPT MADE TO PREVENT STUDENTS RETURN TO CLASSES.

4. PARTY (PSD) DIRECTOR MOHAMED SAYAH, WHO ALSO DEPUTY TO PRIME MINISTER, HELD MEETING MAY 1 WITH STUDENTS WHO BELONG TO PSD DURING WHICH HE MADE APPEAL FOR STUDENTS TO RETURN TO CLASSES. HE REPORTEDLY SAID UNIVERSITY DEANS ARE PREPARED HELP STUDENTS FOLLOW COURSES NORMALLY. HE ASSURED STUDENTS FREEDOM OF CLASSES WOULD BE GUARANTEED AND MEASURES WILL SOON BE TAKEN TO PREVENT RECURRENCE OF DISTURBANCES IN FUTURE. PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS HAVE ALSO INDICATED EXAMS WILL BE HELD AS SCHEDULED.

5. PROFESSORS UNION REPORTEDLY HAS PROTESTED TO NATIONAL TRADE UNION (UGTT) EXECUTIVE BUREAU ABOUT POLICE ENCROACHMENT ON CAMPUS APRIL 20 AND 22 AND HAS CALLED FOR RELEASE OF STUDENTS APPREHENDED AT UNIVERSITY APRIL 22 AS CONDITION FOR RETURN TO CLASSES. THIS PROTEST NOT PUBLISHED HERE.

6. STUDENTS TRIAL OF APRIL 20 REPORTED REFTEL IS UNDER APPEAL ON GROUND STUDENTS WERE DENIED LEGAL COUNSEL. POLICE BELIEVED TO BE PREPARING CASE AGAINST NUMBER OF STUDENTS UNDER ARREST WHO ALLEGEDLY HAVE CONNECTIONS WITH MARXIST-LENINIST GROUPS. WHEN THESE MAY COME TO TRIAL IS NOT KNOWN.

7. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IS SPEECH IN TUNIS MAY 1 (BEING REPORTED SEPARATELY BY AIRGRAM) MADE ONLY BRIEF ALLUSION TO CONTINUING STUDENT PROBLEM. HOWEVER, BELIEVE HE HAS ADVOCATED HARD LINE ON PROBLEM IN RECENT MEETINGS WITH MINS JUSTICE AND INTERIOR.

8. COMMENT" WHILE IT CLEAR GOT IS TAKING STRIKE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VERY SERIOUSLY, (E.G., SEE ATT-1784) IT APPEARS BE RESISTING CLOSING ALL OR PART OF UNIVERSITY FOR WHAT REMAINS OF ACADEMIC YEAR EVEN THOUGH STUDENTS SHOW LITTLE INCLINATION END STRIKE. REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF EXAMS WILL BE HELD OR HOW MANY STUDENTS WILL ATTEND. STUDENT STRIKE WOULD ORDINARILY CARRY LITTLE THREAT OF SPREADING TO OTHER SECTORS (IN ABSENCE OF OFF-CAMPUS DEMONSTRATIONS, WHICH SECURITY FORCES HAVE NOW RENDERED HIGHLY UNLIKELY)

SO LONG AS UGTT REMAINS UNINVOLVED, AS HAS BEEN ITS
POLICY WITH RESPECT TO STUDENT ISSUES. APPROACH TO
UGTT EXECUTIVE BUREAU BY PROFESSORS (PARA 5 ABOVE) IS
UNLIKELY TO LEAD UGTT TO TAKE A POSITION, AND STUDENT
STRIKE WILL PROBABLY REMAIN AN ESSENTIALLY STUDENT AND
CAMPUS PROBLEM.
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